PROJECT 216

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND ATTITUDES REGARDING WORK

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ABSTRACT

This study is designed to determine whether probationer's employment status, including their ability to obtain and maintain a job, is or is not related to their perception of the attractiveness of work and associated barriers and losses as measured by the Vocational Opinion Index (VOI). One hundred and twelve (112) probationers between the ages of sixteen (16) and twenty-four (24) were administered the VOI by their supervising probation and parole officer. It was found that attractiveness of work was not related to employment status. However, it was positively related to age. Persons who are usually unemployed, as well as those who quit or were fired, perceived more barriers to work than those who indicated a previous stable employment record. Those who were unemployed at the time of the study, and who demonstrated a lack of concern about finding a job, were found to perceive employment as "depriving them of time with family and friends in particular". It appears that in order to reduce perceived barriers to work, employment programs could be enhanced by intensifying the development of job search skills, as well as by reducing anxieties to new situations and people. There is a need for creative programming that deals with unemployed clients' reluctance to enter the labor market at the expense of time with family and friends. The study supports the use of the Vocational Opinion Index as a diagnostic tool for the selection of candidates into different types of employment programs.

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CHAPTER I

ATTITUDES TO WORK AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS

The purpose of the present research is to investigate the relationship between the employment status of a group of probationers and their attitudes toward work. Interest in exploring attitudes toward work arose when it became apparent that the numbers of unemployed probationers were high, in relation to the general population within the same age range and educational status (Renner, 1978; Gendreau, Madden and Leipciger, 1979). Surveys conducted by Employment and Immigration Canada in 1979, indicate that fewer than ten percent (10%) of people within an age range of sixteen (16) to twenty-four (24) and at a mean grade level of ten were unemployed half the time (Casserly, 1980). It is interesting that Renner (1978) reported that thirty-four point three percent (34.3%) of probationers, on termination of their probation orders, fell into that category.

Unemployment problems have traditionally been resolved by skill training and the creation of job opportunities. However, there remains a small group, within any given population of unemployed persons, that is unable to take advantage of placement opportunities or that is unable to participate in training programs (Benson et al, 1973; Lower, 1970). Since the correctional population contains a disproportionate number of unemployed, it may follow that a disproportionate number of the correctional population is also unable to take advantage of the skill training or job opportunity placement. Further, agencies providing employment counselling to probationers, have reported that certain clients have problems keeping appointments and participating in job readiness sessions (Kelly 1981). The work "unreadiness" of this correctional population, (as in the case of the sub-group of the unemployed in the general population) may be related to attitudes toward work i.e. perceived barriers to obtaining it, perceived losses associated with doing it, and its attractiveness as a way to occupy oneself.

1. The Importance of Attitudes

A review of available literature identified the attitudinal component as an important feature in work readiness. Twentyman, Jenson and Kloss (1978) explored the transfer of skills training to job seeking behavior within an experimental population of probationers with a history of psychiatric referral. This sample was compared with a control group of randomly selected unemployed persons from a state unemployment office. All subjects were pre-tested for interview performance, ability to fill out applications, ability to deal with anxiety-producing interview questions, and the ability to ultimately obtain employment. Only the experimental group was post-tested on these variables. The experimental group was split into two sub-groups; a training group which received four (4) hours of training in job-seeking behaviors, and a "monetary incentives" group in which each participant was paid one dollar ($1.00) for each job application filed with an employer.

The researchers found in the post-test results that the experimental group that received the skill training showed significant differences, not only in interview behaviors, but also in their perceptions of themselves and their work-related abilities. Attitudes changed as well as behaviors in the skill training group, even though training was not designed to produce such changes. In a two week follow-up period, these participant's found employment eighty percent (80%) of the time. Their ability to maintain employment was not reported.

The attitudinal change that occurred was not a planned experimental result. Therefore, the relationship between behaviors and attitudes was not examined. However, these factors may have been the critical variables in determining employability. If job maintenance is the ultimate goal in a job readiness program, and if a relationship can be found between attitudes to work and job status variables, the correlation between attitude and employability warrant exploration.

Lower (1970) studied the problem of communicating the importance of four basic work norms; attendance, promptness, adherence to rules, and production, among a population of individuals who had been considered unemployable. A field experiment was designed to test a number of hypotheses concerning practical, salient factors in the norm transmittal process.

The specific importance of this study, within the present context, is twofold. Firstly the author identified that an individual's attitudes and perceptions of employment will influence that persons ability to: a) accept information about procedures for obtaining employment as well as b) to readily accept directions in performing work.

Results of a questionnaire administered to both trainers and trainees after each session, indicated contradictory perceptions of what had been taught and learned. A mechanism for feedback to the trainer of the learner perception was indicated.

A client's perceptions and attitudes to work must be identified in order to assess that person's needs for training in job readiness skills. The factors under consideration be clearly defined and understood, but a reliable instrument must be available to confirm that a change has taken place.

2. Studies of Attitudes to Work

There have been several studies of attitudinal factors which may affect employability.

Walther (1970) reported the development of a self-report inventory to measure work-relevant attitudes. The items used were derived from research studies that dealt with the culture of poverty. The preliminary measures were tested on selected, urban, out-of-school enrolees in the Neighborhood Youth Corps programs operating in the Washington D.C. area. Items which correlated significantly with school status and/or employability were retained. Factor analysis of the items produced three significant factors; optimism, self-confidence, and un-socialized attitudes.

Further, a typology of unemployables developed by Walther identified three general types: the rebel, the low self-esteem individual, and the individual lacking or having lacked opportunity. The study noted that attitudinal factors of optimism, self-confidence, and unsocialized attitudes, weighted differentially within these types. The rebel scored high on unsocialized attitudes, but did not score in any significant way on optimism or self-confidence. The low self-esteem individual scored low on optimism and self-confidence, but not in any significant way on unsocialized attitudes. The individual lacking opportunity scored high on both optimism and self-confidence and low on unsocialized attitudes.

The scales are an important contribution in developing a diagnostic process. Unfortunately, further reports regarding how these findings were applied were not available.

In 1978, Dr. P.J. Patsula of the University of Ottawa, working together with the staff of Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, (CEIC) produced a report entitled, "The identification of barriers and strengths affecting employee-client employability; operational definitions and sample diagnostic questions for use by Canada Employment Centre Counsellors". Related research formed the basis for a current study geared to the needs of the "not-job-ready employee-clients". The reports on validation studies of materials developed will be available in 1981 (Patsula and Boyle, 1980). Unfortunately, in view of the present studies in progress, CEIC would not release any of the relevant reports for review.

3. Implementing a Practical Attitudinal Measure

Associates for Behavior Research (Benson et al, 1973) reported the development of a psychometric instrument for measuring attitudes to employment called the "Vocational Opinion Index" (VOI). It was the outgrowth of research that dealt with factors facilitating or inhibiting the transition of individuals trained in occupational skills from training status to work status. Three necessary factors for successful transition were identified: adequate skill training, placement opportunities, and an adequate Job Readiness Posture (JRP).

In spite of similarities in the level of job skill acquisition and placement opportunities, some individuals failed to obtain and maintain a job. Failure was attributed to an inadequate JRP; that is, the combination of attitudes, perceptions, and motivations as they impact on an individual's ability to obtain and maintain a job. An effective measure of this dimension was lacking.

In developing a JRP scale, items were collected from interviews with staff and students involved in work training programs. The subjective factors underlying transition that were isolated were: a) the perceived outcomes of working; that is, the material and psychological benefits and b) the perceived difficulties of obtaining and/or maintaining a job. These were called the Attraction and Barrier factors. Negatively worded items, included in the Attraction category, became known as the Loss factor.

The resulting self-report Likert scale called the Vocational Opinion Index (VOI) consisted of 52 statements. They were concerned with working or about things that can or might happen when people work. Validation studies were conducted among disadvantaged workers in 1974, vocational/technical high school students in 1975, ex-addicts in rehabilitation programs in 1975, and individuals in federal penal institutions in 1978. Certain items of the VOI were adapted for use with specific populations to reflect their peculiar situations. Norms were established for each group (Associates, 1978).

The VOI was shown to differentiate among individuals in different work status categories. It substantiated the researchers assumption that different JRP's are represented in different employment status categories.

Individuals with poor JRP's and therefore poor employment histories, were found to score in a bi-polar fashion on all three factors. Their expectations regarding the "world of work" were either unrealistically positive or excessively negative. At the first drawback on the job, they were found to retreat from the unpleasant situation. Their perceptions of barriers and losses inhibited successful search or maintenance behavior. Individuals with good JRP's or stable work histories scored moderately on all three factors, this demonstrated a realistic identification of the attractions, and also the drawbacks of working, as well as some of the problems associated within finding and keeping work.

Rogers (1980) adapted the VOI to administer it to inmates. Residents at Adult Training Centres (ATC), Ontario Ministry of Correctional Services, were tested to determine if they were affected in any way by the work readiness programs offered. No significant differences were found in work attitudes of ATC residents when tested by the VOI in pre- and post-tests. These results raised the question of both instrument validity and program utility. The adaptation of the questionnaire may not have been a valid instrument, or the actual programs provided at the ATC's may have been designed to deal only with skill training and job acquisition but not with their "Job Readiness Posture".

In order to determine the relevancy and utility of the instrument as a measure of the Job Readiness Posture of probationers within the Ontario Ministry of Correctional Services, a pilot study of attitudes regarding work was conducted with a small sample of such individuals (Kelly, 1979). Probation and Parole Officers administered an adaptation of the VOI to thirty-three (33) probationers.

For analysis of the VOI scale results, the probationers were grouped into three work status categories that covered the six (6) month preceding period as follows: Group I - fully employed up to seventy-five percent (75%) of the time, Group II - fully employed less than seventy-five percent (75%) but up to twenty-five percent (25%) of the time, Group III - fully employed less than twenty-five percent (25%) of the time.

The mean score on the Attractions, Barriers, and Losses scales indicated that Group I scored the lowest on all three scales; Group II scored the highest on all three scales; Group III fell consistently between the two preceding categories of employment status.

These findings suggested that the Vocational Opinion Index (VOI) discriminates among individuals in different work status categories.

The review of the literature documents the importance of attitudes regarding work in order to understand unemployable persons and help them develop acceptable work relevant behaviors. The Associates Vocational Opinion Index (VOI) offers a diagnostic tool for assessing the job readiness of persons in transition to employment.

4. Applied Relevance

The results of the present study are relevant to programs initiated by the Community Programs Division, Ontario Ministry of Correctional Services, which provide pre-employment programs to probationers with special employability needs. The Vocational Opinion Index provides an assessment tool for the perceptual and attitudinal factors which influence employability. If there is a significant correlation between the variables of attractiveness to work, barriers and losses associated with work, and aspects of employment status, this instrument will provide an important diagnostic tool to assessment staff for selecting unemployed clients for specialized attitude change programs. The information provided would be both descriptive of clients' work attitudes and perceptions as well as prognostic in regard to the realistic expectations for success in program completion and job search. Knowledge of these factors may have implications for the design of job readiness programs as well as their evaluation.

CHAPTER II

HYPOTHESES

This present study was designed to determine whether or not probationers usual employment status which includes their ability to obtain and maintain a job, was related to their perceptions of the attractiveness of work, and associated barriers and losses as measured by the Vocational Opinion Index (VOI).

Hypothesis I

Attitudes to Work and Independent Variables

The amount of attraction to work, perceived losses associated with employment and perceived barriers to employment will be related to usual work status, job search behavior, reasons for leaving previous employment, employment status on entry into probation, and length of employment.

Specifically, it is hypothesized that:

(A) Job Search Behavior

Unemployed clients actively seeking employment will score significantly higher on the attraction scale, but significantly lower on the losses and barrier scale than will those who show a lack of concern. The latter group will score lower on attractions and significantly higher on losses and barriers.

(B) Entry Employment Status

Clients who are employed upon becoming probationers will score significantly lower than the unemployed group and the students on all three factors of attractions, barriers, and losses. Unemployed clients will score significantly higher on attractions, barriers, and losses than both the employed and the students.

(C) Length of Employment

The longer the client is employed the lower the attraction, barrier, and loss scale. The client who is employed for the least period of time will score significantly higher on attractions, losses, and barriers.

(D) Leaving Previous Employment

Individuals who quit a job to acquire a better position will score higher on attraction but lower on barrier and losses than clients who were fired. These clients will score significantly higher on barrier and losses.

(E) Hypothesis II Representativeness of the Sample

The sample population drawn in this survey will be similar to the Ontario probationers as sampled in the Renner (1978) study, on a number of demographic and work-related variables, and are depicted in Table 1.

(a) usual work status
(b) subcategories within a): job search behavior
(c) entry/termination employment status
(d) sample distribution age 16 - 21

Of those items chosen for hypothesis II testing, these particular items provided comparable Renner data.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

1. Design

The hypotheses outlined in the preceding chapter were tested using a survey of a sample of probationers. The study included three (3) dependent variables: attractiveness of work, perceived barriers to employment, and perceived losses associated with working. They were all measured by the self-administered Vocational Opinion Index. The independent variables were measured by the Demographic Questionnaire and completed by the supervising Probation and Parole Officer who is knowledgeable of the subjects. These variables included age, education, work status, and behavior in obtaining and maintaining work.

To determine the relationships between the dependent and independent variables, levels were created within the independent variables. (Table 1). In the collapsing process, some subjects were eliminated in order to focus on extreme conditions. (Table 2)

2. Subjects

The subjects were 112 male probationers who ranged in age from 16 to 24 and who, at the time of data collection, had been under supervision for no longer than three months. All subjects in the sample were volunteers and were drawn from the caseloads of 40 Probation and Parole Officers. All six offices of Toronto West Region were involved and provided subjects drawn from a wide distribution of socio-economic backgrounds, including inner-city and suburban residents.

3. Instruments

The Face Sheet

This information, completed by the test administrator, identified the office, the test administrator, the volunteer client, and the date of completion. Because of the data collection involved, clients self-reported by means of a paper and pencil test that required reading and comprehension skills, the test administrator also identified on a six point scale, his/her perception of the participants comprehension of and ability to read the questionnaire. This rating was based on the frequency with which the items were explained or read to the participant during the course of questionnaire completion. This item provided useful information about the respondent when scoring the questionnaire but was not used for data analysis.

Demographic Profile

This questionnaire utilized items from the Renner (1978) study. It was completed by the test administrator who was also the volunteer client's supervising Probation and Parole Officer. The form was completed either while the subject was completing the VOI or shortly thereafter. To facilitate analysis, items of the questionnaire were grouped into categories (see Table 2).

It should be noted that the Renner item that deals with employment status at termination was adapted to identify employment status upon entry into probation.

The sample collection for this study was conducted upon entry, whereas the Renner study, collected data on clients at termination. Data was utilized to test both hypotheses.

The Vocational Opinion Index (VOI)

This questionnaire was developed by the Associates for Behavior Research (1978) for a prison population. Some items were adapted to make them appropriate for probationers. The VOI measures respondents attitudes to work on three (3) variables: attraction to work, perceived losses associated with working, and barriers inhibiting employment.

Within each variable of the VOI, the items were classified into diagnostic subcategories of the variable. This permitted the identification through analysis of the most significant areas of concern within the variables. A listing of the variables with subcategories is provided in Table 6.

Associates (1973, 1974, 1978) report the validity of the VOI for use as a psychometric instrument measuring Job Readiness Profiles (JRP). A description was provided in section 3 of Chapter I. The instrument has been listed in Buros (1978), but no critical reviews have been published to date. The VOI was chosen to determine its value as a diagnostic instrument when working with persons who have employability problems.

Subjects were asked to respond to the VOI independently, but in the presence of the test administrators. Administrators were cautioned to use non-judgemental tone or paraphrase in reply to any inquiries by subjects that pertained to the questionnaire items.

4. Threats to Validity

Certain potential threats to validity were identified and safeguards were instituted. To minimize procedural variations among the forty test administrators, each package of instruments had attached to it procedural guidelines that reiterated the directions provided during the briefing. The staff were asked to record, on the face sheet, any peculiar incidents surrounding the completion of the questionnaire.

Because the study was voluntary, the likelihood of a biased sample and a threat to external validity arose. Those clients most likely to participate were pre-judged to be agreeable, articulate, and educated individuals. There was a concern that students and employed persons might be disproportionately represented in the sample.

To determine the generalizations of results to all probationers in the province, demographic items that were utilized were identical to those used in the Renner Study (1978). In that study, data was collected from a random sample of terminated clients. Files were provided by Probation and Parole Officers who had carried the caseloads. A total probationer sample of 1,905 was collected and the study is considered to be representative of probationers in Ontario. A finding of no significant differences between the Renner data and the demographic items of the present study provides evidence that the present sample is representative.

5. Survey Procedures

(a) Briefing of Staff

The Regional Administrator, six (6) Area Managers, and 45 case-carrying Probation and Parole Officers were briefed on the purpose and method of the research. Through group meetings and individual interviews, staff were informed on the procedures for data collection. Probation officers were told how to uniformly administer the Vocational Opinion Index, and the procedure for completing the demographic questionnaire was explained. A full procedural guideline was attached to each package of questionnaires.

(b) Data Collection

A total of two hundred (200) questionnaires were distributed. The quantities were proportional to the number of case-carrying officers. Each officer was responsible for five questionnaires. Distribution was left at the discretion of the Area Managers. The researcher made weekly telephone calls to the Area Managers. Visits to the offices were arranged in order to pick up the completed questionnaires and to discuss problems with individual officers or Area Managers.

The data collection period was set for January, 1981. A four week collection period was expected based on an average monthly intake rate of 300 probationers per region (Workload Summary Monthly Statistics, October 1980) and based on Renner data, that identified 60% of a probation caseload at below age 22. That is, a monthly flow of 200 probationers would form the desired population. Since the sample could be drawn from individuals placed under probation supervision over a preceding three month period, it was expected that potential subject population would be at least six hundred (600) probationers, allowing for two out of three to decline to participate.

The returns of responses were, in actuality, well below the expected level and the data collection period required an extension to March 4, 1981, in order to collect at least half of the anticipated sample (112 of 200).

A number of reasons were identified that explain this shortfall. This Region has been recently involved in a number of research-related exercises and there was a feeling that they were being saturated with research involvement.

In addition, a number of the staff had planned winter holidays during the data collection period, reducing the "real" collection time for these staff. Manager's method for questionnaire distribution had a direct effect on the frequency of response within a given office. For example, when a Manager actually solicited staff participation, 16 of a total of 24 responses were completed within the original data collection period. In the offices where questionnaires were held by the Manager and handed out only on the request of staff, only 4 of 16 returns were completed within the original data collection period. Ten (10) were actually completed on the last possible evening for data collection; that is, on March 4, 1981. This pattern of questionnaire distribution was observed to effect response production in all offices.

Further, a number of staff said that they "just forgot about the study", in view of the heavy demands of their workload, or in view of client counselling needs. Many staff reported that clients found the volume of materials comprising each questionnaire aversive, and quite a few declined to participate. One can assume this feeling was shared by the staff. In addition, a review of the Workload Summary statistics for the months of November, December and January revealed unusually low intake levels.

All these factors contributed to the reduction in size of the sample and the extension of the data collection period.

(c) Procedure

The data collection for this research study was intended to be part of the assessment process, which usually involves the client in considerable information giving activity. The clients who agreed to participate in the data collection were told about the general purpose of the study and were advised that their involvement was voluntary. Occasionally, a number of clients were gathered into the boardroom of an office to complete the questionnaires, and were supervised by their Probation Officer. On two occasions, clients were given their instructions and were permitted to complete the questionnaires at home. They returned them the following day. Officers reported that in these cases clients were highly responsible individuals and that forms were promptly returned with no completion problems identified.

In some cases, especially when the pressure to produce data was increasd, staff solicited responses from those clients with whom they shared good relationships. Therefore, the process was no longer one of assessment.

In any case, clients completed the Vocational Opinion Index and the supervising Probation Officers completed the face sheet and demographic questionnaire.

6. Ethical Considerations

(a) Probationers were told that their responses would be used in a research project which was developed to examine attitudes regarding employment. They were informed that the results might influence program development in the Ministry, and that their participation would be helpful. They were further advised that their involvement was voluntary.

(b) Analysis was based on non-identified group data. However, for purposes of future follow-up research, personal identification on the instruments was required. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of all individual responses and all responses were numerically coded.

(c) The research process was perceived as beneficial to the routine assessment procedure. Assessment staff were provided an opportunity to focus on subjects' employability needs. This focus might have promoted earlier intervention in cases where these needs existed.

(d) The survey procedure was non-invasive, because no detrimental effects were perceived to ensue from participation.

7. Analysis

Predictions were made with respect to relationship between work status and demographic variables as well as attitudes toward work and the representativeness of the sample. The first hypothesis was tested using analysis of variance, and the second was tested using a complex chi-square.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Hypothesis I

The Vocational Opinion Index was scored to produce a numerical value for each of the variables of attraction, barrier, and loss. A high score indicated the presence of a high level of that variable.

The responses on the VOI of the sample population were grouped as per Table 2. Any incomplete VOI responses for any given factor were rejected for analysis purposes. Separate two-way analyses of variance were conducted within the three variables of the VOI and between the various categories of the selected items of the demographic questionnaire.

The relationship between employment status variables and the VOI scales are depicted in Tables 3, 4, 5, and 13.

Attraction to work was not differentiated by the categories within Usual Employment Status, Job Search Behavior, Entry Employment Status, Length of Time Employed, and Reason for Leaving Previous Employer.

Losses associated with working were not differentiated by any of the employment related variables except Job Search Behavior ($F = 6.36$; $p < .05$). Perceived losses arising from employment appear to inhibit active job search behavior.

Barriers to obtaining work were perceived to be significantly higher on the part of the usually unemployed than on the usually employed and students ($F = 3.55$; $p < .05$) and for those who quit or were fired from their previous job as opposed to those who left for an improved position ($F = 3.60$; $p < .06$). The other variables were unrelated to Barriers.

These results demonstrated that responses on two factors of the VOI, Losses and Barriers, are significantly related to aspects of employment status or behavior related to obtaining and maintaining work. Because the VOI factors contain subcategories it was decided to distill the results among the significant aspects of work behavior categories. In order to find those items of the VOI which would provide the most significant correlation between response and status, a separate two-way analysis of variance was conducted within the subscales of the VOI factors of Loss and Barrier (Table 6) and between the significant categories of the demographic questionnaire. Results are depicted in Tables 7 and 8.

Loss of Time with Family subscale within the Losses scale appeared to inhibit job search behavior ($F = 8.66$; $p < .01$) more than did the Personal Time Loss subscale ($F = 3.34$; $p < .10$).

Of the six subscales within the Barrier Scale, three subcategories, Medical Problems, Child and Family Needs, and Criminal Status, were not differentiated by the categories of either Usual Employment Status or Reasons for Leaving Previous Employment. However, New Situations and People appeared as a significant barrier to the unemployed within the Usual Employment Status category ($F = 2.705$; $p < .08$) and to those who quit or were fired ($F = 3.950$; $p < .06$). The ability to obtain and maintain a job was a significant barrier for those who quit or were fired

(F = 3.950; p < .06) but was even more detrimental for the usually unemployed (F = 4.973; p < .01). Not identifying work as a valuable means to occupy oneself was found to be a barrier among the usually unemployed (F = 5.985; p <.005) as well as among those who quit or were fired (F = 6.165; p < .02).

Further analysis was conducted among the three categories of the Usual Employment Status within the Barriers to Work Scale and the three significant subgroupings of the factor. t's were calculated to identify the source of the difference. The results supported the hypothesis that the unemployed would perceive significantly higher barrier levels than the employed group (t = 2.47, df = 67, p < .01 one tailed) and the student group (t = 1.74, df = 37, p < .05 one tailed). However, students responses were not significantly different from those of the employed, although student mean responses were higher than those of the employed.

Students and the employed scored significantly lower than the unemployed on the subgroupings of the barrier scales. Specifically, on the New Situations and People subscales, the unemployed scored significantly higher than both the employed (t = 2.45, df = 68, p <.01 one tailed) and the students (t = 1.49, df = 37, p < .10 one tailed) and on ability to obtain and maintain a job, the unemployed scored significantly higher than both the employed (t = 2.834, df = 68, p < .005 one tailed) and the students (t = 1.756, df = 37, p < .05 one tailed). The students, although they scored higher than the employed, were not significantly different from that group.

A subscale identifying a barrier to work through the lack of perceived value in employment as an activity with which to occupy oneself, provided the most significant and interesting results. As was expected, the unemployed scored significantly higher than both the employed (t = 2.45, df = 68, p< .01 one tailed) and the students (t = 3.79, df = 37, p < .0005 one tailed). However, students appeared to perceive more value to working than the employed group who scored significantly higher than the students in this particular subscale of the Barrier Scale (t = 1.82, df = 67, p < .05 one tailed).

Hypothesis II

The distribution of clients on a number of demographic and work related items was compared with the distribution of a sample in the Renner Study on identical items.

A test of significance was conducted to determine whether the two populations differ. A complex chi-squared was used because only the mean of the Renner data was available, not the variance.

A comparison between the two samples on the Usual Employment Status of the client data, the obtained (χ^2 = 8.138, df = 6, p <.10) indicated that the sample distribution on that item was similar to that in the Renner Study.

However, a comparison in Job Search Behaviors (χ^2 = 11.435, df = 2, p < .005), entry status (χ^2 = 29.267, df = 4, p < .005), and age categories (χ^2 = 21.095, df = 2, p <.005) indicated that the sample was significantly different from that of the Renner study.

There are limitations to the generalizations that can be made of the findings within this study to probationers beyond the specific sample population.

Additional Findings

(a) Maturation and Education

An analysis of variance was conducted to determine whether differences within the VOI scales could be related to Age or Education (Tables 9, 10 and 11). Educational standing was not a factor, but on the Attractiveness to Work Scale, age (level of maturation) was significantly related to work attractiveness with the older probationers (19-24 years) and they scored higher than the younger probationers (16-18 years) ($F = 4.83$, $df = 98$, $p < .05$).

(b) Independence of the VOI Scale

The independence of the VOI Scale of Attractiveness, Barrier, and Losses was tested (Pearson Product Moment Correlation) on the data arising from the sample of probationers. As indicated in Table 12, the Attractiveness Scale appears to be independent of the other two. The significant correlation between Barrier and Losses ($t = 8.2$, $p < .001$) indicates that they may be measuring, to some extent, the same underlying phenomenon. An item analysis, using a larger sample, may be in order to create more homogeneous scales, although the present finding may be anomolous since such an analysis was used in the original creation of these scales (Associates, 1978).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of attitudes towards work as measured on the Vocational Opinion Index (VOI) and probationers' employment status including behavior that is related to obtaining and maintaining work. The three scales of the VOI measured three factors that tend to constitute a person's Job Readiness Posture (JRP). They are: attractiveness of work, the perceived barriers, and losses associated with working. The scores are intended to provide a Job Readiness Profile on individuals entering pre-employment training programs and depict attitudinal and perceptual differences between individuals who are job ready and those who are not. The literature that deals with the utility of the Vocational Opinion Index indicates that the scores on the three factors discriminate significantly between individuals with different categories of unemployment status. The instrument, therefore, provides an important diagnostic tool for workers in the field of pre-employment counselling who must identify clients who require programs in job readiness prior to vocational placement. A study among a small sample of probationers (Kelly, 1979) confirmed that the Vocational Opinion Index did indeed discriminate among those clients who had a history of stable employment, those clients who had a poor employment record, and who were unemployed. It was also evident that individuals who were not active job seekers were further discriminated against within the scales of the Vocational Opinion Index (VOI).

The present study was conducted to provide validation of those findings among a larger sample of probationers. The design of the survey was expanded to include demographic variables which would specify not only employment status. It also dealt with unemployment-related behaviors in a number of categories, which permitted validation of discrimination on the scales of the VOI.

This study is considered to be a qualified success. A significant relationship was not demonstrated for all the scales and types of employment status and related behaviors. However, the results supported the hypotheses on two scales; Loss and Barrier. They significantly discriminated categories of Usual Employment Status and job search and maintenance behavior in the predicted direction. Certain subscales of these two scales were found to be the scales which produced the significant relationship between status and behavior.

The factors measured by the significant subscales discriminated between the usually employed and the usually unemployed. In most cases, students scored similarly to the usually employed. These findings provide information which has implications for the content and design of employment counselling programs. Specifically, it was found that students and the employed scored lower on two of the subscales of the Barrier Scale. These were the perceived anxieties about new situations and new people and the perceived inability to obtain and keep employment. The usually unemployed and those who quit without a positive reason or who were fired, scored significantly higher on these aforementioned subscales.

It was determined that the sample of probationers may not be representative of the total population. On a number of demographic variables, other than usual employment status, the means of the present sample differed from that of Renner (1978). In retrospect, this finding, in itself, should not be surprising since the Renner sample consisted of all ages and sexes while the present study was restricted to data on males aged 16 to 24 years. The Vocational Opinion Index

should be validated for use as a diagnostic tool among probation clients on a wider sample. In terms of the size of the sample, the date collection may have been more successful if a vigorous marketing campaign had been launched to involve volunteer probation officers. Should a replication of this study be planned, it is recommended that the research sites be located in areas where managers are committed to the process, and would play an active role in promoting staff involvement. Also, adequate time must be permitted to allow staff to administer the lengthy instrument to the subjects and to ensure a large enough response. It may further be appropriate to identify diverse communities as research sites, perhaps where there is an involvement in employment program development. These strategies would provide a wider representation of probationers in the sample population.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Arising from the findings of this study, recommendations can be made about pre-employment programs that aid individuals who are usually unemployed and who frequently quit or are fired. Components of program design should offer experiences that would enable those clients to overcome their anxieties associated with job search or those fears of the first days on the job. These programs should also include lessons and exercises to raise clients' levels of self-esteem and confidence as well as knowledge and skill with regard to their activities that relate to the process of job seeking and job maintenance.

On the subscale of the Barrier Scale, identifying perceived lack of value associated with working, the unemployed and those who quit or were fired scored the highest as was predicted. The students however, scored significantly lower that the usually employed group. This finding suggests that students value work as an activity more than the usually employed group. This factor may, in part, account for this group's motivation to remain in school. It may also represent the naivete of students about the realities of full-time employment. Students entering employment counselling may require assistance in setting realistic expectations about their anticipated experiences in the world of work.

There are many vocational and employment counselling programs currently in place or being developed which offer effective exercises in job search techniques and related skills. In light of these findings, the usually employed who are, at a point in time seeking work, and the students are those who are most likely to succeed in the typical job search assistance program. However, the usually unemployed individual appears to require an additional component that will enhance his perception of work as an activity of personal value. This motivational component is the difficult and frustrating aspect of pre-employment counselling among the "hard-core" unemployed. These findings further suggest that this client group would require intensive and long term programs to achieve skill development and attitude change. Once a job is obtained, clients should be involved in job maintenance programs to assist them in resolving the problem situations and experiences that may have caused the original instability.

On the Losses scales, unemployed individuals who showed a lack of concern were inhibited in their job search activity through a reluctance to give up personal time and time with their family. In terms of program design, it may be useful to design components dealing with the structuring of leisure time that will provide a quality and intensity to the free time available in a work week. Recreational programs, as rewards to those who have obtained employment, may be a concrete example to these clients of how to schedule their leisure time around the job instead of the other way around. These programs may also be useful in providing employed clients with a pro-employment peer group to enhance the value of work factor noted above.

The study provided evidence that individuals in different categories of employment status are indeed significantly differentiated by the Barrier and the Loss factor of the Vocational Opinion Index. The results were indicative of a potentially valuable diagnostic tool and further research utilizing the Vocational Opinion Index is hereby recommended.

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TABLE 1

REPRESENTATIVENESS OF THE SAMPLE

Usual Employment Status of The Client

Employment Status	Renner Data	Kelly Data
1. - Seldom Unemployed, Seldom Changes Employer	28.6	31.3
2. - Seldom Unemployed, Often Changes Employer	13.2	17.0
3. - Seasonal Worker, but Otherwise Employed in "Off-Season"	4.1	2.7
4. - Often Unemployed, Actively Seeks Employment	13.3	14.3
5. - Often Unemployed, and Shows a Lack of Concern	12.5	3.6
6. - Almost Always Unemployed, but Able to Work	7.5	3.6
7. - Off the Labour Market (e.g., Homemaker, Student, Retired)	20.8	27.5
	100%	100%

Employment Status at Entry to and Termination of Probation

Employment Status	Renner Data (Termination)	Kelly Data (Entry)
1. - Employed Full-Time	45.7	39.3
2. - Employed Part-Time	6.8	11.6
3. - Unemployed Seeking Full-Time Employment	11.2	24.1
4. - Unemployed Seeking Part-Time Employment	2.9	2.7
5. - Unemployed Not Seeking Employment (Collapsed)	33.4	22.3
	100%	100%

Age Distribution 16 - 21 Year Category

	Renner Data	Kelly Data
1. - 16 - 17 years	10.7	31.3
2. - 18 - 19 years	31.5	33.1
3. - 20 - 21 years	18.7	20.5

TABLE 2

COLLAPSED DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE ITEMS FOR ANALYSIS

	Variables	Percentage of Sample
I.	**Age**	
1.	16 - 18	48.2%
2.	19 - 24	51.8%
II.	**Education - Grade Level Completed**	
1.	0 - 9	33.9%
2.	10	31.3%
3.	11+	34.8%
III.	**Usual Employment Status**	
1.	Seldom Unemployed-Seldom Changes Employer Seldom Unemployed-Often Changes Employer	48.2%
2.	Often Unemployed-Actively Seeks Employment Often Unemployed-Shows a Lack of Concern Almost Always Unemployed, But Able to Work	21.5%
3.	Student	19.6%
	Note: Not included for purposes of analysis	
	1. Seasonal Worker 2.7%	
	2. Off Labour Market, Disabled, etc. 8% =	10.7%
	Job Search Behavior	
1.	Often Unemployed-Actively Seeks Employment	14.3%
2.	Often Unemployed-Shows Lack of Concern Almost Always Unemployed But Able to Work	7.2%

TABLE 2 (continued)

Variables			Percentage of Sample
IV.	**Entry Employment Status**		
1.	Employed Full-Time		39.3%
2.	Unemployed (Seeking Full-Time Employment) Unemployed (Seeking Part-Time Employment)		26.8%
3.	Student		17.9%
	Note: Not included for purposes of analysis		
	1. Employed Part-Time	11.6	
	2. Unemployed Not Seeking Employment	4.5 =	16.1%
V.	**Time Employed at Current or Previous Job**		
1.	3 Months and Less		43.7%
2.	1 Year and Less		26.0%
3.	Over One Year		16.0%
	Excluded: Those never employed		14.3%
VI.	**Reason For Leaving Last Employment**		
1.	Quit - No Health Problems Quit - For Health Reasons Fired - Or Told to Resign	)	21.3%
2.	Explanation Indicated Personal Improvement - or Other Reason Not Client Cause and Other than Laid Off		31.3%
	Excluded: i) No Response		8.9%
	ii) Laid Off		23.2%
	iii) No Previous Work		13.4%
	iv) Incarcerated		.9%
			46.4%

TABLE 3

ANALYSES OF VARIANCE FOR ATTRACTIONS

Source of Variance	Ms	Df	F
Usual Employment Status	29.75	2	.43
Within (error)	69.73	86	
Job Search Behavior	74.82	1	1.06
Within (error)	70.43	18	
Entry Employment Status	76.11	2	.29
Within (error)	61.45	82	
Length of Employment	16.58	2	.23
Within (error)	73.26	82	
Reason for Leaving Previous Employment	80.10	1	1.38
Within (error)	50.00	50	

TABLE 4

ANALYSES OF VARIANCE FOR LOSSES

Source of Variance	Ms	Df	F
Usual Employment Status	65.29	2	.95
Within (error)	68.46	86	
Job Search Behavior	331.35	1	6.36*
Within (error)	52.09	18	
Entry Employment Status	35.10	2	.50
Within (error)	70.31	82	
Length of Employment	145.37	2	2.15
Within (error)	67.63	82	
Reason for Leaving Previous Employment	57.27	1	.91
Within (error)	62.65	50	

* p .05

TABLE 5

ANALYSES OF VARIANCE FOR BARRIERS

Source of Variance	Ms	Df	F
Usual Employment Status	1031.84	2	3.55*
Within (error)	290.54	85	
Job Search Behavior	21.60	1	0.06
Within (error)	375.31	18	
Entry Employment Status	156.16	2	0.58
Within (error)	270.06	11	
Length of Employment	430.82	2	1.37
Within (error)	314.81	81	
Reason for Leaving Previous Employment	1008.71	1	3.60
Within (error)	279.93	49	

* p .05

TABLE 6

SUBSCALES OF THE VOCATIONAL OPINION INDEX

Attractions:

- Benefits to Children
- Benefits to Worker
- Better Life Style
- Independence

Losses:

- Personal Freedom
- Time to Care for and Be With Family

Barriers:

- Medical
- Child Care and Family
- New Situations and People
- Ability to Get and Hold a Job
- Transportation
- Work as Valuable Way to Occupy Oneself
- Criminal Status

TABLE 7

ANALYSES OF VARIANCE LOSSES SUBGROUP

Source of Variance	Ms	Df	F
Loss of Time With Family			
Method of Job Search	112.07	1	8.66**
Within (error)	12.94	18	
Personal Time Loss			
Method of Job Search	58.02	1	3.34*
Within (error)	17.38	18	

* p .10
** p .01

TABLE 8

ANALYSES OF VARIANCE BARRIER SUBGROUPS

Source of Variance	Ms	Df	F
Medical			
Usual Employment Status	2.42	2	.493
Within (error)	4.9	86	
Reason for Leaving	3.49	1	.781
Within (error)	4.46	50	
Family			
Usual Employment Status	11.32	2	.627
Within (error)	18.06	85	
Reason for Leaving	2.39	1	.162
Within (error)	14.74	49	
New Situations and People			
Usual Employment Status	65.62	2	2.705x
Within (error)	24.26	86	
Reason for Leaving	88.623	1	3.950*
Within (error)	22.434	50	
Ability to Get and Hold a Job			
Usual Employment Status	212.95	2	4.973**
Within (error)	42.82	86	
Reason for Leaving	172.05	1	3.905*
Within (error)	44.05	50	
Value of Work as Activity			
Usual Employment Status	44.97	2	5.985**
Within (error)	7.52	86	
Reason for Leaving	41.96	1	6.165**
Within (error)	6.81	50	
Criminal Status			
Usual Employment Status	25.019	2	.946
Within (error)	26.459	86	
Reason for Leaving	50.92	1	1.806
Within (error)	28.20	50	

x p .10
* p .05
** p .01

TABLE 9

ANALYSES OF VARIANCE FOR ATTRACTIVENESS

Source of Variance	Ms	Df	F
Age	301.27	1	4.83*
Within (error)	62.43	98	
Education	119.53	2	.15
Within (error)	63.69	97	

* p .05

TABLE 10

ANALYSES OF VARIANCE FOR LOSSES

Source of Variance	Ms	Df	F
Age	85.33	1	1.29
Within (error)	66.07	98	
Education	64.51	2	.97
Within (error)	66.30	97	

* p .05

TABLE 11

ANALYSES OF VARIANCE FOR BARRIERS

Source of Variance	Ms	Df	F
Age	550.79	1	1.90
Within (error)	290.51	97	
Education	32.25	2	0.11
Within (error)	298.60	96	

* p .05

TABLE 12

INDEPENDENCE OF THE VOI SCALES

Correlation Matrix

Source of Variance	Attraction	Loss	Barrier
Attraction	1.00	0.094	0.194
Loss	0.094	1.00	0.642**
Barrier	0.194	0.642**	1.00

** p .001

TABLE 13

SUMMARY OF ATTITUDE TEST RESULTS BROKEN DOWN BY SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

		ATTRACTION SCALE			LOSS SCALE			BARRIER SCALE		
INDEPENDENT VARIABLE		MEAN	SD	N	MEAN	SD	N	MEAN	SD	N
AGE	16 - 18	66.37	7.51	46	30.76	7.30	46	83.87	16.78	45
	19 - 24	69.85*	8.21	54	28.91	8.77	54	79.13	17.26	54
GRADE LEVEL COMPLETED	0 - 9	66.09	9.79	32	30.71	8.19	32	82.37	18.68	32
	10	69.84	6.80	32	30.50	8.59	32	81.13	17.20	32
	11 - MORE	68.75	7.12	36	28.25	7.68	36	80.43	15.97	35
USUAL EMPLOYMENT STATUS	EMPLOYED	68.06	8.63	50	29.70	9.13	50	78.20	16.72	49
	UNEMPLOYED	69.65	8.41	20	31.95	8.17	20	90.20*	18.89	20
	STUDENT	67.26	7.48	19	28.37	5.43	19	80.53	15.81	19
ENTRY EMPLOYMENT STATUS	FULL-TIME	67.09	8.00	42	28.59	8.43	42	78.15	14.83	41
	SEEKING	70.15	8.49	26	30.54	8.81	26	82.58	20.12	26
	STUDENT	67.88	6.19	17	30.18	7.56	17	79.88	13.59	17
TIME EMPLOYED	UP TO 3 MONTHS	68.44	7.44	41	31.12	7.85	41	82.20	17.28	40
	3 - 12 MONTHS	67.82	10.87	28	30.14	8.39	28	83.25	20.12	28
	ONE YEAR PLUS	69.63	6.35	16	26.12	8.85	16	74.56	13.98	16
REASON LEAVING PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT	QUIT - FIRED	69.05	7.55	22	30.09	8.34	22	85.77	16.22	22
	OTHER	66.53	7.66	30	27.97	7.59	30	76.79	17.10	29
JOB SEEKING STYLE OF USUALLY UNEMPLOYED	ACTIVE	68.53	7.30	15	29.60*	7.30	15	89.60	18.75	15
	NO CONCERN	73.00	11.29	5	39.00	6.93	5	92.00	21.40	5